



July 19, 2010

Church holds vigil for Gulf oil spill

By Dana Ailer
Contributor

Under huge old shade trees outside Trinity Episcopal Church, parishioners and friends took a moment Sunday night as they wondered how mankind's stewardship of the earth had gotten so off track and what could be done about it.

In a prayer vigil for the Gulf conducted Sunday at the church, The Rev. Paul Nancarrow reminded the congregation, "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it."

About 20 attendees at the vigil read from bulletins printed on 100 percent recycled paper. The program included prayers, meditations and hymns with themes of water, pollution, restoration and forgiveness presented by Nancarrow and the Rev. Shelby Owen.

Nancarrow believes a misinterpretation of an often-quoted Bible verse is the root of the confusion regarding mankind's role on earth. The book of Genesis declares God's words to man to have included, "have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

Nancarrow points out the word "dominion" comes from a word that means "house," so God was instructing man to be, "householders, caretakers, family-keepers of creation."

However, Nancarrow said, "We have been remarkably bad at caring for our household."

The explosion of the Deepwater Horizon oil rig and its subsequent 85 days of gushing oil in the Gulf of Mexico are an alarming illustration of his point.

"We've had oil spills before," said Nancarrow, "but this one is unprecedented in its magnitude. We just don't know how this will affect things, or even what things will ultimately be affected."

Paul Bugas, chairman of Trinity's environmental stewardship committee, said, "The oil disaster in the Gulf has affected everything from plankton to people. This damage to the food web and other serious, but unseen, damages will continue on for years to come."

Bugas said he is afraid people don't realize how much damage has been done.

"Cleaning the sandy beaches won't repair the food web," he said. "We humans have been very good at figuring out how to get things from the earth, but a lot more thought needs to go into caring for things afterward. Some areas of the earth have become so polluted that they will never be cleaned through natural means. So now man has to figure out how to clean up after himself."

Nancarrow tried to see a silver lining in the Gulf catastrophe.

"If there's anything good about this spill, it's that the natural and human disasters are so obviously and inextricably intertwined," he said, "that everyone has no choice but to see them together and understand how dependent we are on each other."